TO

HER GRACE

ELIZABETH,

DUTCHESS OF ARGYLE,

BARONESS HAMILTON, &c. &c. &c.

THIS

TRAGEDY

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY HER GRACE'S

MUCH OBLIGED,

MOST DEVOTED,

AND OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

CHARLES HAMILTON.

BRITISH MUSEUM
15 MAY 65

THE

PATRIOT,

A

TRAGEDY.

Altered from the ITALIAN

OF

METASTASIO.

Juſtum, et tenacem propoſiti virum,
Non Civium ardor prava jubentium;
Non vultus inſtantis Tyranni
Mente quatit ſolida: neque Auſter
Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus.
Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ. HOR.

DUBLIN:

Printed for Meſſrs. MONCRIEFFE, JENKIN, WALKER, WILKINSON, WHITE, BURTON, SLEATER, BYRNE, CASH, and HEERY.

MDCCLXXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM
15 65
MAY

The gen'rous mind delights in benefits:
Hence ſpring my country's hate and my regard.

NEOCLES.

If men alone were thankleſs or unjuſt,
It might be borne; but then the Gods too frown
On you, and load you with contempt and woe.

THEMISTOCLES.

What mean'ſt thou, Neocles?

NEOCLES.

Are ſuch pinching wants,
Such baſe neceſſities, the fit reward
Of long-tried virtue?

THEMISTOCLES.

In the changeful ſmile,
Or frown as changeful, of the wayward pow'r,
That ſhifts of life the ever-varying ſcene,
Canſt thou diſcern rewards from puniſhments?

NEOCLES.

No.

THEMISTOCLES.

Then this leſſon from me take and learn;
That virtue gains new luſtre in affliction,
And oft is tarniſh'd by proſperity,
A ſtream that runs o'er pebbles ſweet and clear,
When ſtagnant grows impure: the lance that ſhone
So bright in war, neglected lies in peace,
Incruſted thick, and cover'd o'er with ruſt.

NEOCLES.

But after great and ſignal victories gain'd,
Your glorious triumphs at th' Olympic games,
Your being with olive-wreath at Sparta crown'd;
Such dire calamities exceed all ſuff'rance,
And would unhinge the ſteerneſt ſtoick's mind.

THEMISTOCLES.

Poſterity perhaps will envy more
My ſad diſaſters, than the ſplendid trophies
With which the chance of war adorn'd my toils.

NEOCLES.

Your name will long in after ages live,
As fam'd for bold exploits, as fortitude,

And

And patient ſuff'ring, under dreadful hardſhips;
But wherefore ſeek new dangers in this place?
As yet unconquer'd by oppreſſion's hand,
You ſtill expoſe yourſelf to Perſian rage,
Provoke the vengeance of a barb'rous people,
And ſure deſtruction court upon your head.
Have you forgot the fight of Salamis,
Your wond'rous deeds 'gainſt th' Aſiatick hoſt,
When the proud deſpot, whoſe ambitious mind
Aſpir'd the pond'rous earth to bind in chains
And lead old Ocean captive, cow'ring fled.
Why, thus awake the cruel tyrant's wrath?
If once diſcover'd, where a refuge find?
What means of flight beſet with num'rous foes?
Too many enemies has thankleſs Athens
Rais'd 'gainſt the virtues they deſpair to equal:
But all are bound here to avenge the loſs
Of father, brother, ſon, or kinſman ſlain,
On th' ever memorable day when Greece
Was, by you, reſcu'd from a foreign yoke.
Oh, hear me! let's depart.

THEMISTOCLES.

No more; ſome ſtrangers
This way direct their ſteps: retire.

NEOCLES.

Forgive me,
I cannot leave you thus.

THEMISTOCLES.

Once more, retire;
The preſent moment aſks unuſual caution,
And thy raſh zeal intemp'rate might defeat
Deſigns of higheſt import.

NEOCLES.

Oh, beware!
A ſtorm is gath'ring round us; in its burſting
It may overwhelm——

THEMISTOCLES.

Quit thy unmanly fears.

NEOCLES.

I would but cannot: midſt ſurrounding perils

What

1607/3628.

THE

PATRIOT,

A

TRAGEDY.

BRITISH MUSEUM
15 65
MAY

THE PATRIOT, A TRAGEDY.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE, A Gallery in the Palace of XERXES.

THEMISTOCLES and NEOCLES.

THEMISTOCLES.

THY clouded brow denotes an inward ſtruggle;
What raſh deſign revolv'ſt thou in thy mind?
Give not the rein to thine unruly temper;
Forbear!

NEOCLES.

Let me chaſtiſe yon' haughty ſlave:
Mark'd you not, while you ſpoke, what ſtudied ſcorn
Scowl'd on the beggar's cheek? Your earneſt ſuit
Heedleſs he heard, diſdaining to reply.
Muſt we ſuch galling inſults tamely bear?

THE-

THEMISTOCLES.

Check this untimely heat: the wiſe ſhould bend
To the decrees of fate. Outcaſts of Greece
We ſeek the Perſian court. No giddy croud,
Attendant on ſucceſs, here flocks around me;
No ſummer-inſects in my ſunſhine baſk,
Buzz flatteries in my ear, and court my ſmiles.
My fortune has aſſumed another aſpect:
I am no more the pride and hope of Athens:
While all that fortune lent or heav'n beſtow'd,
Wealth, pow'r, pre-eminence, fame, country, friends,
All's loſt, and in the ſhip-wreck of my fortunes
One only jewel have I ſav'd,———my honour.

NEOCLES.

Forgive me, ſir; my ſoul is on the rack;
The mad'ning image of a father's wrongs
Haunts in a thouſand forms my troubled fancy,
And with indignant wrath diſtracts my brain.
Expell'd from walls, which your own arm has rais'd,
No refuge ſhields you 'gainſt your country's hate;
No place is ſafe, and no aſylum free;
Entrapping toils at ev'ry ſtep are laid,
To ſeize you unawares and ſnatch your life:
Your enemies are ever on the watch,
Purſue you ev'ry where, no ſhelter leave
To ſcreen your hoary head: and ſtill reſign'd,
Calm and ſerene, beneath this ſtorm of ills,
You vent no plaints, and can with patience bear
Indignities ſo monſtrous!

THEMISTOCLES.

Ah! my ſon,
Unpractis'd in the thorny paths of life,
Common events to thee moſt ſtrange appear:
Yet muſt I not condemn theſe ſtarts of wonder.
From admiration, child of ignorance,
All knowledge is deriv'd, as from its ſource;
And ſcience owes its birth to wild amaze.
The hate, which cauſes thy ſurpriſe, is oft
The certain recompence of greateſt deeds.
Th' ungrateful hates all obligation's weight,—

The

15 65 MAY

APOLOGY
TO THE
PUBLIC.

ALTHOUGH this Tragedy is intitled an alteration; it is, however, but an humble tranſlation of Metaſtatio's Themiſtocles: the plot and the exalted ſentiments are all that amiable author's own: ſo ſtrictly has the tranſlator adhered to the original, that he has even preſerved his couplets at the end of every ſcene. If the public enjoys but one tenth part of the delight he has felt in giving it an Engliſh dreſs, his ambition will be amply gratified.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

XERXES, King of Perſia.

THEMISTOCLES, Baniſhed General of Athens.

LYSIMACHUS, Ambaſſador of Athens.

SEBASTES, Confidant of Xerxes.

NEOCLES, Son of Themiſtocles.

WOMEN.

ROXANA, Princeſs of Perſia.

ASPASIA, Daughter of Themiſtocles.

The SCENE is in SUSA.

What ſtar benign ſhall guide our erring ſteps?
My boſom long to gnawing cares a prey,
No where of hope perceives a chearing ray;
Your rigid fortitude alarms me more,
Than all the terrors of this hoſtile ſhore. [*Exit.*

Enter SEBASTES and ASPASIA.

THEMISTOCLES.

Concerns of great import engroſs this man;
His noble aſpect ſpeaks him high in rank;
He may perhaps comply with my requeſt;—
I will addreſs him. Lo! a youthful dame,
Whoſe dreſs beſpeaks her Grecian.

ASPASIA.

Stay, Sebaſtes.

SEBASTES.

Excuſe this rude departure, fair Aſpaſia;
The king expects me.

ASPASIA.

For a moment ſtay:
What edict ſtrange has been proclaim'd of late?
Inform me, for thou canſt.

SEBASTES.

Two hundred talents
Have been, by Xerxes, promis'd to the man,
Whoſe zealous ſearch, detecting the retreat
Where lurks Themiſtocles, ſhall hither bring him
Alive or dead.

ASPASIA.

O moſt unhappy father! [*aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

Permit me, ſir, to aſk you what acceſs
Lies open to the throne, and at what time,
I may approach the feet of mighty Xerxes?

ASPASIA.

How ſhall I warn my father: [*aſide.*

SEBASTES.

Hence, be gone!

THEMISTOCLES.

In ought if I have err'd, you ſhould inform
A ſtranger to your cuſtoms; 'twould be courteous.

SEBASTES.

Farewel, Aſpaſia.

THEMISTOCLES.

Deſpicable pomp! [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

O heav'nly pow'rs! far keep him from theſe ſhores!
[*aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

A ſtranger's ſuit may kindlier welcome find
Haply with this fair Grecian.—Lady——ha!
Whom do I ſee!—

ASPASIA.

Gods! do I wake? Is this,
Is this my father, or his honour'd ſhade?—
Themiſtocles!

THEMISTOCLES.

Aſpaſia!

ASPASIA.

O my father!

THEMISTOCLES.

My daughter!

ASPASIA.

Fly!

THEMISTOCLES.

Art thou alive!—

ASPASIA.

Ah fly!
What inauſpicious ſtar led you to ſeek
This fatal court?—a price is on your head:
The Perſian monarch, thirſting for your blood,
Has offer'd large rewards to have you ſlain.
Ah! dwell not here—ſure death awaits your ſtay.

THEMISTOCLES.

Thy ruffled ſtate of mind may wake ſuſpicion:
Compoſe thyſelf.—Unfold this myſtery;
Say: when, to ſcreen thee from the wild uproar,
Of a late cruel, bloody war, I ſent thee
To diſtant Argos; periſh'd not thy veſſel?

ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

Yes: it was daſh'd in pieces; I alone
Was reſcu'd from the foaming element.
And forc'd to pay the price of liberty,
For an unhappy life preſerv'd by chance.

THEMISTOCLES.

How did this happen?

ASPASIA.

Gods! I'm chill'd with terror.—
A Perſian veſſel brought her timely aid,
And ſnatch'd me from the briny ſwelling wave,
Pale, drooping, breathleſs, ſpent, and half alive;
And ſtraight convey'd me pris'ner to this coaſt.
I was here giv'n by Xerxes to Roxana,
Whoſe gen'rous care in vain eſſays to ſooth
My griefs.

THEMISTOCLES.

Is then thy country known?

ASPASIA.

Not yet;—
The ſecret of my Birth has ne'er tranſpir'd.
My eyes have long'd, with ardor, for this ſight:—
The gods have oft been wearied with my pray'rs,
And importun'd to grant you to my arms;—
Too fatally, alas! they have been heard!

THEMISTOCLES.

Grieve not, my daughter; joy near ſorrow dwells:
Hence, by a ſwift tranſition oft we ſee
Exceſs of bliſs ſucceed to black deſpair.
Our lot, this day, may fortunately change.
From th' inſtant that reſtor'd thee to my ſight,
Inſenſibly my load of woe grows light.

ASPASIA.

But in what abject ſtate am I reſtor'd?
Held here in bondage vile, depriv'd of pow'r
To ſave or tender you the leaſt relief.
You come alone, proſcrib'd and fugitive,
Expos'd to chains, and racks, and cruel death!
Alas! my father, where's your wonted ſplendor?
Where are your friends, attendants, pomp, and wealth?

O partial gods!—thy thunder, Jove, 's inactive!
Ungrateful Athens ſtands!—no bolt in flames
Deſcends upon her guilty tow'rs!———

THEMISTOCLES.

Ah!—hold:
Aſpaſia, rule thy griefs:—my daughter thou!
And long'ſt to ſee thy country laid in aſhes!
Dares to impeach the high beheſts of heav'n,
And call on Jove to dart his vengeful bolts
On ſacred Athens' tow'rs! I cannot ſuffer,
Ev'n in the child I love, ſuch impious thoughts.

ASPASIA.

Your gen'rous ſentiments inhance her guilt.

THEMISTOCLES.

No more.

ASPASIA.

Ah!—fly theſe ſhores inhoſpitable.—

THEMISTOCLES.

Wherefore? in Xerxes court unknown——

ASPASIA.

Unknown!—
Where can Themiſtocles remain conceal'd?
Wide o'er your front diſplay'd, your ſoul emits
Such rays!—your ſearching eye ſuch glances darts,
As muſt diſcover you. The preſent moment
Is with unuſual danger big. From Athens
Know, an ambaſſador arrives in Suſa:
Can you be hid from him and all his train?

THEMISTOCLES.

Say: haſt thou learnt his name, and what event
Occaſions, at this time, his miſſion here?

ASPASIA.

No: but the king is to receive him ſtraight:
Already, ſee th' aſſembled crowd o'erflows
The audience hall.

THEMISTOCLES.

Is every perſon then,
Admitted indiſtinctly?

ASPASIA.

Yes.

THE-

THEMISTOCLES.

'Tis well,
I haſte to gratify an earneſt wiſh,
Long form'd, to view my Enemy.

ASPASIA.

Ah!—ſtop—
Quit your deſign.—You kill me with affright.
If e'er you loved me—for my ſake deſiſt:
By this dear hand, bedewed with my tears—
Thus, on my knees, I hence intreat your flight—
By that ſevere and tyrannizing country.
Which, tho' unjuſt, you ſtill defend and love.—
Oh!—yield!—benignly yield—and grant my pray'r.

THEMISTOCLES.

Come to my boſom, ever dear Aſpaſia.—
Thy pious tears and anxious throbs evince
The genuine warmth of thine attentive zeal:
Place thou thy firm reliance on the Gods,
And of my ſafety to me leave the care.
Nor danger's near approach, nor threats can move
The mind inur'd a fate adverſe to prove.
Th' experienc'd pilot can with ſafety guide
His lab'ring veſſel thro' the ſtormy tide. [*Exit.*

ASPASIA.

Cold, chilling damps invade my trembling frame,——
Benumb'd with fear my feet refuſe to move.—

Enter ROXANA.

ROXANA.

I muſt upbraid thee, with thy want of candour.
Why from me keep the fortunate event?
I look'd for more ſincerity from thee.
Diſtruſt, Aſpaſia, e'er was friendſhip's bane.

ASPASIA.

Confuſion! overheard—loſt, loſt Themiſtocles!

ROXANA.

What dumb? the blood forſakes thy cheeks——thou trembleſt,
Conſcious of being my ſecret enemy,

And plotting 'gainſt my life, my peace, my bliſs!
Have I then in my boſom warm'd an adder,
That now repays my cares with cruel ſtings?

ASPASIA.

Ah! Princeſs!

ROXANA.

Speak not, moſt ungrateful woman!
To thee my ſoul was all unveil'd! my faith
Plac'd in thy truth—my love for Xerxes known—
Yet underhand to practice on his heart!——

ASPASIA.

She means him not. [*aſide.*

ROXANA.

Is this thy gratitude?

ASPASIA.

Thy keen reproof's unjuſt, thy fears are vain.
Poſſeſs, unrivall'd, all the heart of Xerxes!——
I've not ambition to diſpute the prize;
I'm not ſo great a ſtranger to myſelf;
Nor can my lowly hopes aſpire ſo high.

ROXANA.

Vile, vile, diſſembler!—Strong conjectures ground
My Fears.—From th' inſtant Xerxes ſaw thee firſt,
His coldneſs to me has increas'd apace:
He gazes on thy face with eager look;
Thou art his frequent theme; he ſtands confus'd,
If love is mentioned; while to hide his thoughts
He makes pretence of various ſtate-concerns.

ASPASIA.

May not compaſſion work the ſame effects?

ROXANA.

Compaſſion ſeldom goes to ſuch a length,
Unleſs impell'd by latent ſparks of love.

ASPASIA.

Too great the diſtance 'twixt the king and me.

ROXANA.

Love has united oft more diſtant ranks.

ASPASIA.

A ſtranger, friendleſs——

ROXANA.

ROXANA.

'Tis what moſt I dread:
Gems are not priz'd in places of their growth,
We deem them precious from their ſcarcity.

ASPASIA.

Be not, Roxana, too ingenious thus,
For thy own eaſe; thy peace of mind's at ſtake.
I'm innocent and Xerxes may be wrong'd.
If my devouring cares from love aroſe,
Believe me, Xerxes neither can excite,
Nor damp the ſoft emotions of my ſoul.
Another's image dwells within my breaſt;
And poor Aſpaſia has not learnt the art
Of being inconſtant.

ROXANA.

Art thou then in love?

Enter SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

If you ſhould, Princeſs, wiſh to grace the audience;
The Greek ambaſſador repairs to Xerxes.

ROXANA.

Wait for a moment.—

ASPASIA.

Know'ſt thou yet his name?

SEBASTES.

His name's Lyſimachus.

ASPASIA.

My lover here! [*aſide.*
What errand brings him?

SEBASTES.

If report ſays true,
Athens has ſent him to demand Themiſtocles.

ASPASIA.

O cruel fate! when will thy rigours ceaſe?
My lover too becomes my father's foe!—
All then conſpire againſt th' unhappy man!— [*aſide.*

ROXANA.

O love! how wretched is thy votaries' doom!—

Bound

Bound in the thrall of tyrant jealouſy,
His baneful breath envenoms all their joys;
He, with a hundred eyes dimſighted, ſtartles
At excellence, and ſpotleſs worth deforms!——
Have pity on thy friend, my dear Aſpaſia!—
Betray me not:—adieu.—Lead on, Sebaſtes. [*Exeunt.*

ASPASIA.

Far from thy mind remove corroding cares;
Let no baſe doubts diſturb thy gentle ſoul.—
Can this be true!—Lyſimachus himſelf
Seeking my father!—ah!—th' inconſtant ſoon,—
Too ſoon forgets his vows!—he loves no more—
Or lightly thinks that death diſſolves all ties.—
Alas! the ſcenes which adverſe fate diſcloſe
Fill up at length the meaſure of my woes.
No breaſt was e'er with ſharper anguiſh rack'd;
Nor with more poignant ills at once attack'd!
My gloomy days I paſs in ceaſeleſs grief;
Cheer'd by no hope, no proſpect of relief. [*Exit.*

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE, a magnificent Saloon deſtined for public Audiences, a Throne in the Centre, and a ſide View of the City.

Enter THEMISTOCLES and NEOCLES.

NEOCLES.

AH! father, whither tend your haſty ſteps?
Some anxious purpoſe labours in your breaſt,
That mocks conjecture; while my boding fears
Call forth th' imagin'd dangers, and invite
Detection's ſearching eye: and ſee! the king—
Pray you, retire.

Enter XERXES and SEBASTES, with Guards.

THEMISTOCLES.

Mixing with the Croud
We may unnoticed ſtay.

NEOCLES.

Extreme's the peril.

XERXES.

The Greek ambaſſador may now approach.
Sebaſtes, are my offers held ſo ſlight;
Or is my favor undervalu'd thus?
That ſtill Themiſtocles remains conceal'd
From my reſentment.

SEBASTES.

Long he can't eſcape:
Too many toils are ſpread around his paths;
They cannot fail to reach the deſtin'd prey.

XERXES.

I never can have reſt, the while he lives:
He has ſeen Xerxes fly: of all the fleet,

That

That forc'd th' Egœan's groans, he only left me
The fraileſt bark to truſt to for my life;
Reduc'd me to allay my burning thirſt
In bloody, fœtid water; deeming ſweet,
The nauſeous draught.—And ſhall the boaſter live?
No: let his Death atone for agonies,
Whoſe ſad remembrance racks anew my mind.

NEOCLES.

Heard you not! father? (*Aſide to* Themiſtocles.

THEMISTOCLES.

Yes. (*Aſide to* Neocles.

NEOCLES.

Let's fly then. (*ſtill aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

Peace! (*ſtill aſide.*

Enter LYSIMACHUS, followed by a Train of Greeks.

LYSIMACHUS.

Great monarch, Athens, tho' in hoſtile ſtate,
Reveres thy royal majeſty; admires
The many virtues which adorn thy ſoul,
As vaſt and boundleſs as thy wide domain;
And hopes thou wilt confer the boon ſhe aſks.

XERXES.

Of aught but peace, I give thee leave to ſpeak.

NEOCLES.

This is Lyſimachus! (*Aſide to* Themiſtocles.

THEMISTOCLES.

Yes. (*Aſide to* Neocles.

NEOCLES.

So dear a friend
May uſeful prove. (*ſtill aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

Depart: or ſtand here mute!
(*ſtill aſide.*

LYSIMACHUS.

To cruſh diſturbers of the public peace,
Concerns alike the ſov'reigns of all ſtates;
And even enemies, in ſuch a caſe,

Should

Should lend each other aid. Impunity,
Marring all wiſe reſtraint, invites to crimes,
And whoſo ſhields the guilty ſhares the guilt.
Themiſtocles (forgive unhappy friend!)
Is the delinquent for whom Athens ſends;
She thinks him in this court, demands his perſon,
And prays thou would'ſt deliver up her ſubject.

NEOCLES.

O barb'rous pray'r!—inhuman, treach'rous friend!
[*aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

O virtuous citizen! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Ambaſſador!
I will not ſtoop to trace the real cauſe
Which prompts the Greeks to ſend thee to my court;
Nor ſearch how far I may with ſafety truſt
In Grecian faith. Thy craft abortive proves;
The thin diſguiſe betrays thy fraudful purpoſe.
Is Xerxes then ſo ſoon forgot in Athens,
His deadly hate, his enmity unceaſing,
That to her vain and impotent decrees,
She aſks a monarch's miniſtry?—away!
The Greeks, too ſoon elate with victory,
Shall ſee the clouds diſperſe, that late obſcur'd
The Perſian name, while Europe's fartheſt ſhores,
Drench'd with the blood of her expiring ſons
And vocal with their groans, to liſt'ning Aſia
Shall waft the echo of the loud atonement.

LYSIMACHUS.

Yet why withold Themiſtocles?

XERXES.

When found
Within my pow'r, his fate ſhall ſpeak my motives.

LYSIMACHUS.

Therefore, he is not here.

XERXES.

Nor would I tell thee,
Suppoſe he were.

LYSI-

LYSIMACHUS.

Reſentment blinds thee, Prince!
Shake off thine hatred to the Grecian name:
And let the ſacred bonds of peace.——

XERXES.

No more!
I had enjoin'd thee not to ſpeak of peace!

LYSIMACHUS.

And yet———

XERXES.

Enough: I have thy meſſage heard,
And ſignified my will: thou may'ſt depart.

LYSIMACHUS.

I go; but tho' our friendſhip meets thy ſcorn,
Spare thy contemptuous boaſts: already Aſia,
Wiſe from experience, ſhould have known to prize
The worth ſhe hates, and might reſpect a foe,
Whoſe pow'r moſt dreadful is when dreaded leaſt.
[*Exit.*

XERXES.

The Greeks, Sebaſtes, 'mong the Perſians judge
Themiſtocles conceal'd:—ah!—ſtraight diſcover,
If this be true;—conſult thy maſter's eaſe:
Explore his haunts, and drag the victim forth:
His blood alone wou'd cool my fever'd ſoul.

NEOCLES.

And ſtill my father ſtays!—— [*aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

This moment ſmiles
On my deſign. [*aſide.*

NEOCLES.

Oh! where—my father, where—?

THEMISTOCLES.

Moſt potent monarch!

SEBASTES.

Hence preſumptuous man!
Hoa: guards! keep off th' intruder from the throne.

THEMISTOCLES.

The pray'rs of mortals ne'er offend the Gods.

SEBASTES.

Away!

XERXES.

XERXES.

Let him be heard—Come, ſtranger, ſpeak:
What would'ſt thou?——Say.

THEMISTOCLES.

I ſeek aſylum here,
Againſt the griping hand of angry fate:
None but great Jove or Xerxes can protect me.

XERXES.

What country claims thee?

THEMISTOCLES.

Athens gave me birth.

XERXES.

Preſum'ſt thou, Greek, to ſhew thyſelf before me?

THEMISTOCLES.

The name, I know, is here a deep offence:——
Great tho' the crime, yet greater my atonement.
Thou ſeek'ſt Themiſtocles? ſuſpend thy ſearch;
I bring him to thee.

XERXES.

Ah!—can this be true?

THEMISTOCLES.

No falſhood ſhould approach a monarch's throne,

XERXES.

Stranger, thy merit makes my bounty poor:
Where, where's that object of my deadly hate?

THEMISTOCLES.

Within thy view.

XERXES.

Who——which?

THEMISTOCLES.

In me behold him.

XERXES.

Hah!——thou Themiſtocles!——

THEMISTOCLES.

Ev'n I.

NEOCLES,

Undone!——
Oh fatal raſhneſs!——Fly,—fly, wretched Neocles!
[*Exit abruptly.*

XERXES.

And dar'ſt thou brave my raging anger's weight?

THEMISTOCLES.

Grant me thine ear, O king! e'er on my doom
Thou finally reſolv'ſt.——Of fortune's ſports
In me behold an inſtance ſtrange and awful:
This ſame Themiſtocles, who lately ſhook
Thy very throne, an humble ſuppliant ſtands
Here at thy feet, he comes t' implore thy ſuccour;
He knows thee pow'rful, knows thee much aggriev'd;
And yet the hope of kind protection guides him;
Such confidence he places in thy virtue!
Lo!—I am in thy hands;—thou may'ſt or ſave me,
Or on my head thy threaten'd vengeance hurl.——
If in thy breaſt true ſparks of glory live,
An op'ning field invites thine eager ſteps;
Vanquiſh thyſelf—benignly ſtretch thy hand
And raiſe from earth a ſuppliant enemy.
If murm'ring hate reſiſts the gen'rous deed,
From th' envious whiſp'rer turn aſide thine ear,
And ponder well th' inglorious, empty joy
Rais'd by a weak, defenceleſs rival's pangs,
A victim—ſelf-devoted to thy wrath,
Whoſe zealous gratitude might pay thy mercy,
Conſider too, thou art a mighty king,
And I an exile on thy mercy thrown,
All this maturely weigh'd—decide my fate.

XERXES.

Amazing fortitude!—illuſtrious daring
Of valour built on virtue's heav'n-form'd baſis;
Alone, unarm'd, he comes and truſts his life
With an avowed enemy—with Xerxes!—
This is too much.—What would'ſt thou? Say, Themiſtocles!
Would'ſt thou, intrench'd behind my hatred, wound
My glory, and my fame for ever ſtain?
Ah! no:—for once the conqueſt ſhall be mine—
Xerxes has o'er himſelf the triumph won—
Come to theſe arms extended wide to ſhield thee;
My kindneſs ſhall exceed thy ſanguine hopes;
To thee my treaſures ſhall be all unlock'd;
In thy defence my wide-ſpread realms ſhall arm;

And from henceforth, our names together link'd
Shall to remote poſterity deſcend.

THEMISTOCLES.

Too gen'rous prince! until this moment toſs'd
In conſtant ſtorms, illuſive ſeem'd my hopes;
And yet thy lofty ſoul ſurpaſſes far
Their boldeſt flights. What, in this abject ſtate,
Is left me to preſent thee in return,
For ſuch illuſtrious boon?—a life, thy gift?—
My grateful zeal can never, never reach
Th' exalted height to which thy bounty ſoars.

XERXES.

Thy friendſhip more than pays the mighty debt—
Yet ſtill our conteſt ſhould be kept alive;
But with a nobler object for its aim.
Far hence be caſt all thoughts of antient feuds,
And hate, by glory, into friendſhip chang'd.
Henceforth, with thee I wage a gen'rous war;
I will defend thee.—Be thou my ſupport.

THEMISTOCLES.

O Providence! whatever lot's aſſign'd me,
I bow me down, and thy decrees adore.
Whether to fortune's wildeſt rage expos'd,
Or, thus, invited with fallacious ſmiles,
Bent on my race, I'll onward to the goal,
Unaw'd by threats, alike unheeding lures;
Th' inconſtant never ſhall ſucceed to daze
My ſteadfaſt ſight with any fleeting blaze.
The ſweeteſt flow'rs may pois'nous reptiles hide;
Vapours, inflam'd, like ſtars, are ſeen to glide.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

Enter ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

O heav'ns!—where, where's my father! where's Themiſtocles?
I ſeek him here;—but cannot meet his looks—
Yet here it was, ſo Neocles inform'd me.
That to the king he late diſclos'd himſelf:
He could not be deceiv'd——

Enter ROXANA.

Ah! Princeſs, help!—
Protect my father from dread Xerxes' wrath.

ROXANA.

Thy father!

ASPASIA.

Yes: I am th' unhappy daughter
Of loſt Themiſtocles.—

ROXANA.

His daughter, thou!—

ASPASIA.

Alas; in vain, till now, have I conceal'd
My birth.——

ROXANA.

My rival grows more formidable. [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

Oh! gen'rouſly implore his pardon!—

ROXANA.

Pardon!—
Haſt thou not been inform'd?

ASPASIA.

Too well I know
That to the king he has betray'd himſelf;
My brother yielding (to contend were vain)
Effected his eſcape: we met by chance,
And from his lips I learnt the mournful tale.

ROXANA.

Hear, then, what has enſued.

Enter SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

Aſpaſia, haſte:
The king impatient calls thee to his preſence:
Themiſtocles, this moment has inform'd him
Thou art his daughter: pleas'd he heard the news:
No happier tidings could have ſtruck his ears.

ROXANA.

Confuſion! [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

May, ye pow'rs! his mortal hate
More mod'rate prove, or be ſubdu'd!—

SEBASTES.

His hate!
Themiſtocles has won his warm regard.—

ASPASIA.

Gods! can this be? ev'n now he ſought his death.—

SEBASTES.

And, at this time, he folds him in his arms,
Calls him his firm ſupport, extols him high,
And of no other ſpeaks.

ASPASIA.

Excuſe me, princeſs;
I ſink beneath this vaſt exceſs of joy:
Its rapid torrent burſting on my ſoul,
Benumb its faculties, abſorbs it whole.
Such vaſt unhop'd-for bliſs, appears a dream;
I dread to wake and loſe the chearing gleam. [*Exit.*

ROXANA.

Sebaſtes, whence comes Xerxes' earneſt wiſh
To ſee Aſpaſia?—Strange, indeed, it ſeems!—
With ſuch impatience too!

SEBASTES.

Awake my hopes:
Roxana feels the ſtings of jealouſy!
'Tis now too evident that Xerxes loves her;
For ſoon as of her birth he learnt the truth,
A ſudden gladneſs ſparkling in his looks,
Betray'd the ſtrong emotion of his breaſt.

ROXANA.

It cannot be: 'tis thy diſtempered fancy,
That conjures up theſe fantoms.

SEBASTES.

Would it may!
Yet prudence bids us ever dread the worſt.

ROXANA.

Ye pow'rs, in ſuch a caſe, what ſhould I do?

SEBASTES.

Why ſeek revenge: revenge! an eaſy taſk.

For beauty to perform:—think on the pleaſure
Of puniſhing a fickle lover's gilt.

ROXANA.

Ah, impotent relief! unequal cure,
For agonies that ſlighted loves endure!
Thus long to dote upon a fav'rite heart;
Then prove him faithleſs, gives a painful ſmart.
O ſay: ye victims of diſloyal vows!—
Is there a pain ſo little eaſe allows? [*Exit.*

SEBASTES. [Solus.]

The bleſt occaſion favours my deſign:—
'Tis plain that Xerxes loves the fair Aſpaſia;
Roxana cannot brook the partial flame:—
I muſt incenſe her to revenge her wrongs;
And feed the doting monarch's new born paſſion.
If I ſucceed to rouſe her vengeful ſpleen,
The glorious end's attain'd: our num'rous friends
Together join'd muſt Xerxes over-match,
And open to the throne an eaſy way.—
The plan may fail:—I may be overthrown;—
But tempting fortune lures me with a crown!
He raſh was deem'd, who ventur'd firſt t' explore
A ſea unknown, and unfrequented ſhore.
Had doubts the bold adventurer's project croſt;
What treaſures had theſe wealthy regions loſt! [*Exit.*

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE, Magnificent Apartments assigned to Themistocles, with rich Vases filled with Gold.

THEMISTOCLES. [Solus.]

THEMISTOCLES.

UNlook'd for change!—In what mysterious course,
The pow'rs that rule this sublunary world
Deal out of good and ill the various portion!
Erewhile sore-pinch'd with want, a friendless exile,
In vain I sought a cot to hide my head.
Now to the highest pitch of grandeur rais'd,
A splendid mansion owns me for its Lord!
Collected treasures here around me shine:
A monarch and his kingdoms court my friendship.
What will the shifting scene exhibit next,
Upon the world's great stage?—well I perceive.
That life is but a tale:—mine's yet untold.

Enter NEOCLES.

NEOCLES.

Father!—at length the stars auspicious smile
On spotless innocence and virtuous deeds.
We are at length from threatning dangers free.—
How, at the news, will conscious Athens shake!
Th' ungrateful citizens will look aghast
Bursting with rage and malice impotent.
Let them, in turn, destructive vengeance dread,
Our fortune has commenc'd her bright career;
Wealth, honours, pow'r, flow in in copious streams,
Preventing ev'ry wish, while future triumphs,
Playing in fancy's eye, invite to glory:
Alcides' pillars shall not stop our arms;

To

To diſtant climes our conqueſts ſhall extend;
And vanquiſh'd empires own our ſov'reign ſway.

THEMISTOCLES.

Unthinking boy!—a gleam of proſp'rous fortune,
With faithleſs luſtre bright, thy reaſon dazzles:
Thy courage takes too vaſt and rapid flights;
'Tis as untimely as were late thy fears.
An adverſe guſt had fill'd thee with diſmay,
And pale affright within the harbour's reach.
Now that the wind is, for a moment, fair,
Thy ſails are ſpread, before the courting gale.
I wiſh to ſee thee act a diff'rent part.
Thy boaſting confidence deſerves reproof:
'Twould at that time have meritorious ſhone:
The terrors which of late depreſs'd thy mind,
Wou'd now be virtue; but were then a fault.

NEOCLES.

But what are we to dread?

THEMISTOCLES.

In what conſide?
In treaſures which one inſtant to us brings,
Another ſweeps away?—or in thoſe friends
Whom thou haſt ſeen me gain—they are not mine;
But idle ſuitors of capricious fortune;
With her they came, and in her train return.

NEOCLES.

Upheld by Xerxes' pow'r——what can befal us?

THEMISTOCLES.

To ruin us there only needs a frown.

NEOCLES.

Too wiſe, too juſt and grateful is the king.

THEMISTOCLES.

Wiſdom and virtue, ev'n in kings,—of frailty
Pay, to humanity, the frequent tribute.
He may, by knaves, be into errors led:
All places harbour ill-deſigning men;
But with them moſt the ſoil of courts abounds.

NEOCLES.

You are above the reach of calumny.

THE-

THEMISTOCLES.

Where gen'ral emulation envy breeds,
The virtue ſhining moſt is leaſt ſecure.

NEOCLES.

May we not then——

THEMISTOCLES.

Retire:—the king approaches.

NEOCLES.

What magic pow'r lies hid beneath your words!——
I fancied myſelf bleſs'd, and ſafe, at length.
From all the ſad viciſſitudes of fate.
A thouſand perils now croud on my ſight;
All objects, round me, take another form.
Thus, in ſome theatre's contracted ſpace,
Whoſe bounds, refuſing all controul, embrace
The vaſt immenſity of time and place,
The varying ſcenes the mind in mazes lead:
Now gloomy priſons, palaces ſucceed;
Now verdant groves, the ſea retiring, riſe
Where foaming billows ſeem'd to mount the ſkies.

Enter XERXES.

XERXES.

Themiſtocles!

THEMISTOCLES.

Dread Sire!

XERXES.

I ſtill remain
Deep in thy debt: I promis'd great rewards
To him who ſhould to Xerxes bring Themiſtocles!
I have obtain'd my wiſh: it with me reſts
That promiſe to fulfil.

THEMISTOCLES.

Such ſplendid gifts
Profuſely thus beſtow'd, by far exceed
My poor deſerts.

XERXES.

No recompenſe can pay
Their claim: I am ſo proud to have thee near,

Am

Am by poſſeſſing thee ſo much enrich'd;
That all return's unequal.

THEMISTOCLES.

Gen'rous prince!

XERXES.

I will repair the groſs injuſtice done
By fortune's ſpite, and, to her ſhame, exalt thee:
Lampſacus, Myon, with the city bath'd
By th' ever fam'd Meander's winding ſtreams,
Are, from this inſtant, thine. More worthy proofs
Of my juſt friendſhip ſhall hereafter grace
A virtue, which my raptur'd ſoul admires.

THEMISTOCLES.

Ah! prince, more gently uſe thy glorious triumph;
Thy favours overwhelm me with confuſion:
How can my poor deſerts thy bounty juſtify?

XERXES.

How? ſeems it little to believe me generous?
Thus nobly to my pow'r thyſelf confiding;
And, in thee, to my kingdoms giving back
All they had loſt?

THEMISTOCLES.

Can you then forget
The devaſtations which ſo late I caus'd,
The blood I ſpilt!——

XERXES.

Atonement's made for all,
By thus affording me the glorious means
Of crowning virtue in my enemy.
My late diſhonour was the work of fate;
But this great conqueſt gain'd is all my own.

THEMISTOCLES.

Illuſtrious ſentiments!—befitting ſouls
Deſign'd by heav'n to hold the place of Jove,
And rule the globe with delegated ſway.
O happy kingdoms, under ſuch a king!—

XERXES.

Come: let's contend, as we propos'd, and ſtrive
Each for the nobleſt palm of excellence.
Make thou my pow'r the guardian of thy life;

And

And to thy valour I reſign that pow'r.
I now confer on thee ſupreme command
O'er all the Perſian armies: At the head
Of muſter'd legions, I'll inveſt thee ſtraight,
With th' enſign of thy high authority.
Revolted Egypt firſt demands thy care;
Prepare thee—to chaſtiſe her inſolence.
Thoſe troubles quell'd, a nobler taſk awaits us:
Join'd with Themiſtocles, the world combin'd
Shall fall an eaſy conqueſt to my arms.

THEMISTOCLES.

O pow'r of inborn virtue!—mighty monarch!—

XERXES.

Go on, my friend, and now ſuppreſs thy thanks:
The hand of victory ſuſpended waits,
With laurel wreaths to decorate thy brow.
Thy glorious deeds hereafter ſhall proclaim
What thy full heart is panting to diſcloſe.

THEMISTOCLES.

Ye pow'rs celeſtial! o'er your ſemblance watch!
Who, by your godlike attributes inſpir'd,
Delights to ſave, and is in bleſſing bleſt,
And grant me means to ſhew my gratitude!
Methinks I hear th' inviting trumpet ſound—
The battle joins—deſtruction flies around.
No terrors can my grateful breaſt appall;
I'll conquer for my prince, or nobly fall. [*Exit.*

XERXES.

Unnumber'd cares for ever ſit enthron'd
Upon the knitted brow of royalty,
Which would embitter ev'ry hour of life,
But for the pow'r of thus diffuſing bliſs;
Of freeing virtue from the galling yoke,
And tyrannizing will of hood-wink'd fortune.
This bright prerogative fills up the ſoul
With genuine gladneſs; ſooths the pangs of empire,
And ranks a monarch with the deity.
From th' inſtant when I late obtain'd Themiſtocles,
My boſom has with heav'nly raptures glow'd;
And with divine controul my hand is arm'd.—

Now,

Now, to ſecure th' important acquiſition,
With fair Aſpaſia I'll divide my throne:
Her virtue, birth, and beauty, juſtify
My choice. Themiſtocles ſhall then defend
His own deſcendants' juſt inheritance.
This union, too, will ſtrengthen friendſhip's bands.—
But, firſt, I wiſh to know her ſentiments.
Sebaſtes has my ſtrict command to ſound her:—
He ſhould be now return'd.—Perhaps he comes.—
O heav'ns!—Roxana here.—I muſt avoid her.—
(offering to go.

Enter ROXANA.

ROXANA.

Ah! whither Sire, ſo faſt?—Why from me fly?—

XERXES.

Concerns of mighty import call me hence.—

ROXANA.

Roxana once had ſhare in thoſe concerns.—

XERXES.

But ſo increas'd of late——

ROXANA.

I well perceive
How much Themiſtocles has multiplied 'em.
And meet it is that the illuſtrious gueſt
Should wholly thus great Xerxes' heart engroſs.
I wonder not at thy perplexity:
The father's great deſerts, and——

XERXES.

Farewell, Princeſs.

ROXANA.

Ah! barb'rous,——ſtay:——

XERXES.

Should I not undeceive her? *[aſide.*
Hear me, Roxana, while my inmoſt thoughts
Unfolding.——

Enter

Enter SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

Sire, the Greek ambaſſador
Demands a ſecond audience.

XERXES.

Not yet gone!—

SEBASTES.

No: having ſince, in Suſa, found Themiſtocles,
He comes with mighty offers for his perſon.

XERXES.

This is preſuming on my lenity:
I will not hear him:—bid him leave the court.
Let him depart.

ROXANA.

Oh! might this warm reſentment
From wounded pride, not love, proceed! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Yet bring him:
He ſhall be puniſh'd in a diff'rent way.
[*Exit* Sebaſtes.

ROXANA.

Ah! deign thy purpoſe to impart!

XERXES.

At preſent
It is impoſſible.

ROXANA.

And yet ev'n now
Thy promiſe was, to ſatisfy my doubts.—
Why leave me thus to languiſh in ſuſpenſe?

XERXES.

Spare me the taſk, and let my ſilence ſpeak
A truth too harſh for utterance.—farewel! [*Exit.*

ROXANA. [Sola.]

In vain, I longer would indulge my hopes.—
Aſpaſia triumphs.—See the haughty fair.—

Enter ASPASIA.

Where are the charms that captivate the heart
Of faithleſs Xerxes?

ASPASIA.

Are thy jealous doubts,
Princeſs, at length remov'd?

ROXANA.

In vain I trace
The mighty cauſe of ſuch a ſtubborn flame. [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

What are thy thoughts:—why muſing, on me gaze?

ROXANA.

With wonder ſtruck, thy features I ſurvey;
Admire that face, and thoſe attractive graces,
Whoſe influence diſturbs a monarch's peace.
A love-ſick heart, by them of eaſe bereft,
Has an undoubted plea for broken vows. [*Exit.*

ASPASIA. [Sola.]

What harſh expreſſions from her lips have dropp'd!
O tyrant Jealouſy! what dreadful torments,
Await theſe hearts that own thy cruel ſway!
For baſe Lyſimachus—I prove thy rage.—

Enter LYSIMACHUS.

LYSIMACHUS.

But for a moment will I ſee my fair.——
My eyes to meet hers long—then—ſure I wake!—
Is this Aſpaſia?

ASPASIA.

Well, too well, he knows
That yet I live:—th' ingrate has broke his chain:
Another object now employs his thoughts:
While his yet lov'd idea I eſſay
From my reluctant breaſt in vain to tear.

LYSIMACHUS.

Ah! turn thine eyes on me, ador'd Aſpaſia?

ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

Whence is that well known voice? who calls Aſpaſia?

LYSIMACHUS.

'Tis thy Lyſimachus, thy faithful lover,
Whom the kind Gods, in juſtice to his truth,
Bleſs with thy ſight.

ASPASIA.

Why ſeek Aſpaſia here?
She's dead.———

LYSIMACHUS.

So fame has ſaid, but ſpoke not truth:
She lives—ſhe lives, this idol of my ſoul!—
I've heard the wond'rous tale of her eſcape:
I know the means by which ſhe was preſerv'd.

ASPASIA.

What! thou haſt learnt all this? know then beſide,
That this Aſpaſia lives for thee no more.
The ties that held us once are now diſſolv'd.

LYSIMACHUS.

Hah! ſay'ſt thou cruel maid? why rack me thus?
Why ſtab a heart which on thee dotes to madneſs!

ASPASIA.

So true a lover,—ſo ſincere a friend
Has an unqueſtion'd claim to kinder treatment?
Barbarian! canſt thou meet my looks, and, ſeeking
My father's life, prefer thy odious ſuit?

LYSIMACHUS.

Oh cruel maid! forbear the ſharp reproach!—
Could'ſt thou inſpect my breaſt, and view its ſtruggles,
Thou would'ſt much rather pity than upbraid me.
A ſacred duty binds me to obey
My country's mandates; but the Patriot lives
Within, at conſtant variance with the lover.

ASPASIA.

Or one or other muſt be now forgot.

LYSIMACHUS.

I ſhould not do the firſt, the laſt I cannot:
A ſtranger long to peace, and glad'ning comforts,
I here ſolicit what I dread t'obtain.

ASPASIA.

Thanks to the Gods! thine efforts hitherto
Have fruitleſs prov'd.

LYSIMACHUS.

Alas! thou little know'ſt!
They have, indeed, been too ſucceſsful?—Pardon,
Ye pow'rs, protectors of my country's weal!
O gods of Athens! pardon for theſe ſighs,
Forc'd by the ſorrows of my lov'd Aſpaſia!—

ASPASIA.

Hah!—Eaſe my riſing fears—ſay, how ſucceſsful?

LYSIMACHUS.

The king has yielded to the pray'rs of Greece.
But now he promis'd to ſend back Themiſtocles;
Nay, bound himſelf by oath for the performance.—

ASPASIA.

Thus Xerxes means to puniſh my refuſal.— [*aſide.*
Have pity on me! good Lyſimachus!—
By thee my father may be ſav'd—Oh! ſave him!—

LYSIMACHUS.

Ah!—by what means?—The king, perhaps, already
Expects me at the place, where all his troops,
And people are aſſembl'd:—in their ſight,
He is reſolv'd to put him in my hands.
O think, what can remain within my pow'r?

ASPASIA.

All if thou wilt:—Permit him to eſcape.

LYSIMACHUS.

Forbear the raſh requeſt.

ASPASIA.

I only crave
This ſingle proof of love:—Canſt thou refuſe me?

LYSIMACHUS.

All-ſeeing gods! ye bound me to my country,
E'er my heart felt the mighty pow'r of love!—

ASPASIA.

Art thou oblig'd to be an inſtrument
Of ire?—t'imbrue thy hands in guiltleſs blood?

LYSIMACHUS.

Forbid it, Heaven! 'tis furtheſt from my wiſh:
But duty's ſacred law extorts obedience.

ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

Moſt true: we both have duties to diſcharge:
I ſtrictly ſhall attend to mine.—Farewel.

LYSIMACHUS.

Ah! whither flieſt thou?

ASPASIA.

To entomb myſelf
In Xerxes hated arms.

LYSIMACHUS.

In Xerxes arms!

ASPASIA.

He loves me, and my filial zeal requires
That I ſhould haſten to a parent's ſuccour.
Before Lyſimachus, with well-feign'd paſſion,
Rais'd in my artleſs breaſt a glowing flame,
I was the daughter of Themiſtocles.

LYSIMACHUS.

Wilt thou amaze the world with this example
Of cruel breach of faith?

ASPASIA.

I but adopt,
Thy boaſted plea: I muſt fulfil my duty.

LYSIMACHUS.

So little coſts it, thou inconſtant fair!

ASPASIA.

It coſts me little!—O ungrateful!—Know,
That Xerxes yields my father to the Greeks;
But in reſentment of Aſpaſia's coldneſs:
Ere now he made an offer of his hand,
And ſhe who can deſert thee with ſuch eaſe,
Not to abandon thee, refus'd a crown.

LYSIMACHUS.

Say'ſt thou, Aſpaſia!

ASPASIA.

More I have to ſay:
Learn then, ingrate! that tho' a thouſand motives
Urge me to hate thee—ſtill my heart is thine:
And yet I muſt from thee for ever fly———
My heart within me bleeds—its ſtrings will burſt.—
Fain would I check its pangs—it cannot be;—

My boaſted courage fails.—I ſtrive, in vain,
To keep in pent-up ſighs, that ſtop my breath,
And from mine eye reſtrain the ſtarting tear.

LYSIMACHUS.

Reſiſtleſs eloquence of weeping beauty!
I yield, I yield, Aſpaſia:—dry thy tears:—
Here at thy feet I ſwear——What have I ſaid?
Oh! loſt to honour, loſt to duty!

ASPASIA.

Fly not,
Ah! fly not thus!——

LYSIMACHUS.

My virtune ſhuns a conflict
Too pow'rful for reſiſtance.

ASPASIA.

In thy breaſt
If yet a ſpark of pity lives, oh! hear me!

LYSIMACHUS.

No more—Farewel—there's peril in my ſtay!—
O gods! what mortal can unmov'd, behold
Diſtreſſed beauty pleading, and not yield!
Who can reſiſt ſuch eyes, thus arm'd with tears!—
I muſt or fly thee now, enchanting maid—
Or give up Athens—honour—duty—fame! [*Exit.*

ASPASIA. [Sola.]

In Xerxes, then, is all my hope!—oh!—fate!—
I muſt ſubmit to drag tyrannic chains,
To groan by ſtealth, and ſmother all my pains.—
His tender ſighs ne'er can my pity move;
My heart is ſhut againſt a ſecond love.—
A parent's danger calls;—my heart obeys:—
To ſave his life, I'll languiſh out my days. [*Exit.*

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE, A large and rich Pavillion, adorned with Military Trophies; under which is a Throne.—A Plain at a Diſtance, with the Perſian Army under Arms.

Enter XERXES and SEBASTES, followed by Satraps, Guards, and the People.

XERXES.

SAy'ſt thou, Sebaſtes? Does Aſpaſia, then,
Reject my hand?

SEBASTES.

The firſt addreſs of love
Is apt to crimſon o'er a virgin's cheek:
Aſpaſia may in ſecret for thee ſigh,
And bluſh to give the gentle paſſion vent:
Soon, at her father's nod, the veil muſt drop,
And ſhew thee all her heart.

XERXES.

It may be ſo.

SEBASTES.

Behold th' illuſtrious exile, follow'd by
The Greek Ambaſſador.

Enter THEMISTOCLES and LYSIMACHUS, with a Train of Greeks.

XERXES.

Bring forth the ſtaff,
The enſign of my military chief.

LYSIMACHUS to Themiſtocles.

My valu'd friend! for what a fatal office
Have I been ſingled out! I am aſham'd——

The-

THEMISTOCLES to Lyſimachus.

Of what aſham'd? Diſcharge the glorious duty,
The friend and patriot ſhould not be confounded:
Our country is a deity, to whom
All leſſer int'reſts ſhould be ſacrific'd:
I would not heſitate in ſuch a caſe.

XERXES.

Draw near, Themiſtocles, my warriors wait,
Aſſembled here, to hail their valiant chief.
Theſe num'rous legions only want a head:
Be thou their leader. Here, receive this ſtaff:
O'er them, I give thee abſolute command.
Puniſh, reward, as thou ſhalt judge moſt fit:
Fight thou my battles, triumph o'er my foes.
My honour, and the fate of Perſia ſtand
Committed to thy charge.

LYSIMACHUS.

Am I deceiv'd?
Has then Aſpaſia pacified the king? [*aſide.*

THEMISTOCLES.

Great monarch! wholly truſting in thy virtue,
I grateſully accept th' illuſtrious rank,
Thy bounty's gift, and ſwear thee fealty.
O may ſucceſs attend my feeble efforts!
If, in the womb of fate, diſaſters threat;
Be, on my head, alone, their fury ſpent.
Let th' Army conquer, and the leader fall:
Let thy victorious ſoldiers to thee bring
His urn, with laurels, not with cypreſs crown'd.

LYSIMACHUS.

Thus, Xerxes, in my hands thou giv'ſt Themiſtocles!

XERXES.

I ſwore indeed to ſend him back to Greece:
Mark, if I do not ſtrictly keep my vow.
The chaſtiſement long threaten'd, long defied,
Awaits your inſolence.—Unconquer'd chief!
Another ſhall ſuppreſs th' Egyptian rebels;
Straight carry thou my vengeance into Greece;
Sack, burn, deſtroy, and lay the country waſte.
Let Sparta, Corinth, Argos, Thebes and Athens,
Be loaded with our chains.

THE-

THEMISTOCLES.

Undone Themiſtocles! [*aſide.*

LYSIMACHUS.

To witneſs this, am I invited here?

XERXES.

No more: depart, and to thy maſters bear
Th' important tidings: tell the liſt'ning crowds
How the ſcorn'd fugitive to Greece returns,
And what attendants lead the exile home.

LYSIMACHUS.

O hapleſs country!—O diſloyal maid! [*aſide.*
[*Exit.*

THEMISTOCLES.

A Traitor, I! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Why loſt in thought, Themiſtocles?

THEMISTOCLES.

O gracious prince! recall the fatal orders,
Let other nations feel thy conqu'ring ſword.

XERXES.

While haughty Greece lifts high her ſcornful head,
No meaner conqueſt can for me have charms.

THEMISTOCLES.

Reflect.——

XERXES.

I am reſolv'd to cruſh the Greeks,
And ev'ry obſtacle inflames my wrath.

THEMISTOCLES.

Place then in other hands the chief command
Of all the Perſian armies.

XERXES.

Doſt thou mock me?

THEMISTOCLES.

Lo! at thy royal feet I lay reluctant
The ſplendid badge of th' elevated poſt.

XERXES.

How!

THEMISTOCLES.

Should I violate with impious hand
The hallow'd earth preſt by my infant ſteps,

And

And be my parent country's parricide?
Ah! no: my miſeries ſhall never urge me
To perpetrate a deed ſo vile and heinous.

SEBASTES.

What ſtrange temerity! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

No more of Athens:
This is thy country now: that perſecutes;
This welcomes thee, ſupports, defends thy cauſe.

THEMISTOCLES.

Perſia protects, but Athens gave me birth.
Deep in each gen'rous breaſt implanted lives,
For ever lives, unalter'd, uncontroul'd,
Affection filial for the parent ſpot
That witneſs'd our firſt breath. The brutes themſelves
Viſit with ſavage joy their native dens.

XERXES.

I burn with rage [*aſide*] Then Athens ſtill employs
Thy thoughts: what, in her, can'ſt thou love ſo much?

THEMISTOCLES.

All, Sire! the aſhes of my anceſtors,
Her ſacred laws, her tutelary gods,
Her name, * *Religion, Language, Manners, Intereſts,*
The ſplendor which ſhe from my toils derives;
Her ambient air, her ſoil, her plants, her walls,
Her very ſtones.—

XERXES.

Ungrateful! dread my wrath.—
How dar'ſt thou wound my ears with pompous boaſts
Of hateful fondneſs for my ranc'rous foe?

THEMISTOCLES.

I am——

XERXES.

Thou art my bitter enemy;
I have, in vain, with favours ſtrove to gain
Thy love.

* *Taken from his Majeſty's Speech, at the opening the Seſſion, the 5th of December*, 1782.

THE-

THEMISTOCLES.

Their ever-living characters
Are printed in my heart. Let Xerxes ſend me
Againſt his other enemies—my blood
Is, for his ſervice, ready to be ſhed:
But let him not expect, that e'er the wrongs
I ſuffer, will compel me to betray
My country's intereſts, and diſturb her peace.
No: Xerxes, preſs it not: I'll periſh for her.

XERXES.

No more: reflect, and change thy ſentiments:
The friend of Athens cannot ſhare the love
Of Xerxes. Chooſe between us.

THEMISTOCLES.

I have choſen.

XERXES.

Beware: a moment may decide thy fate.

THEMISTOCLES.

Full well I know the ground on which I tread:
Nor am unconſcious of impending ruin.

XERXES.

Why thus provoke a Prince, whoſe pow'r can make thee
Of mankind, or the envy, or the ſcorn,
Or bleſt, or wretched?

THEMISTOCLES.

True: but not a rebel.

XERXES.

Thou ow'ſt thy life to me.

THEMISTOCLES.

But not my honour.

XERXES.

Spurning my friendſhip, braving my reſentment,
Thy country's hatred thou repay'ſt——

THEMISTOCLES.

With love.

XERXES.

O gods! what inſults! Are theſe fit returns
For Xerxes' kindneſs,

THEMISTOCLES.

More could Athens ſuffer,
More would my grateful zeal delight to pay.

XERXES.

XERXES.

My patience is exhauſted: take away
Th' ungrateful man: let him be cloſe confin'd,
And meet the puniſhment his raſhneſs courts:
I may perhaps this boaſted courage ſhake.

THEMISTOCLES.

No terrors can aſſail a guiltleſs breaſt:
I ſhall in chains preſerve this front ſerene;
Nor racks, nor tortures can my courage ſink;
'Tis from the crime, not puniſhment, I ſhrink.
And ſince for loyalty I'm doom'd to death,
I joy to ſeal it with my lateſt breath.

[*Exit guarded.*

Enter ROXANA.

ROXANA.

Ah! Xerxes, ſcarce can I believe my eyes.—

XERXES.

Such frantic raſhneſs paſſes all belief:
Here, in the face of all my court and people,
Themiſtocles inſults and braves my pow'r:
He publicly avows his zeal for Athens,
And for her ſake deſpiſes both my love
And all my gifts.

ROXANA.

My hopes revive. [*aſide.*] And yet
Th' Athenian, yielding to his daughter's pray'rs,
May ſtill relent and learn to prize thy friendſhip.

XERXES.

Ah! no: they are alike invet'rate foes:
And both ſhall now my vengeance feel. A hate
For Xerxes is inborn with ev'ry Greek.

ROXANA.

Once more I'm happy. [*aſide.*] All have not the heart
Of thy ſincere Roxana.

XERXES.

I perceive it,
And of the paſt repent.

ROXANA.

ROXANA.

And yet I fear
That ſhould Aſpaſia hither come——

XERXES.

Aſpaſia!
She will not dare!

Enter ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

Mercy! oh! mercy Sire!

ROXANA.

See if ſhe dares!—attend not to her plaints.

XERXES.

I would, but cannot, ſhut my ears! [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

O Xerxes!
Save, ſave my father—give him to my tears,—
Reſtore him to the bleſſing of thy friendſhip.—

XERXES.

How beauteous in her grief! [*aſide.*

ROXANA.

I dread th' event.— [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Com'ſt thou to ſue for mercy at my hands!
Thou! who perhaps no leſs my love deſpiſeſt,
Than other ingrates!

ASPASIA.

No:—I have been wrong'd;
My late refuſal did not flow from ſcorn.—
Ah! ſpare my bluſhes—grant my father's life—
This trembling hand is thine.

ROXANA.

I burn with rage. [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Shall he, who to my love prefers the hatred
Of my moſt hated foes, defy my pow'r,
Preſuming on the friendſhip he deſpiſes?

ASPASIA.

I aſk much leſs:—ſuſpend awhile thine anger;

I may perhaps induce him to comply.—
Am I denied!—O gods!—what miſery
Falls to my lot!—I am the firſt to prove thee
Relentleſs:—none, 'ere this, from Xerxes went
Diſconſolate.—Ah! no:—it cannot be:—
This rigour, ſure, is foreign to thy heart,
And to thy boſom coſts a painful ſtruggle:
Thy own benevolence is piercing through
The paſſing cloud of thy ſeverity:—
The one is genuine, and the other feign'd.—
O Prince benign! yield to thy generous feelings,
Give me my father—give him to my hopes—
Or at thy feet I ſhall expire with grief.

XERXES.

Riſe.——What enchantment! [*aſide.*

ROXANA.

Am I thus deceiv'd! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Thy father will perverſely ſeek his doom;
Let him obey: his fate is in his hands.
I ſhall awhile ſuſpend the threatening blow;
But will not lay the thunderbolt aſide:
He muſt reſolve to ſue for mercy ſtraight.
Obſtructed fury, like cloſe pent up flames,
Impetuous burſts, with new reſiſtleſs force.
[*Exit with Guards.*

ROXANA.

Oh! torment of deſpair! [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

Forgive, Roxana,
What filial duty forces from my lips.——

ROXANA.

Swift, vaniſh from my ſight, imperious maid:
'Tis plain that thou haſt conquer'd: I confeſs it,
And to thy mighty charms reſign my claim.—
Art thou not yet content?—ſeek'ſt thou for more?
Still would'ſt thou triumph o'er my vanquiſh'd pride?
I've borne too much:—henceforth thy looks inſult me.

ASPASIA.

I can with patience bear thy keen reproach,

And

And in thine anguiſh, with thee, ſympathize.
Thou can'ſt not ſee what paſſes in my heart,
Witneſs its throbs, and pangs, and anxious cares.
Whoe'er miſtakes the ſpark that fires my ſoul,
Or will not heed the motive of my actions,
Cannot be certain whether, in this ſtate,
I challenge pity moſt, or envy raiſe. [*Exit.*

SEBASTES.

I muſt embrace this opportunity,
And of her angry mood avail myſelf. [*aſide.*

ROXANA.

Sebaſtes,—ah! could'ſt thou avenge me now,
Of barb'rous Xerxes!—miniſter a cure
To the deep rankling wound my boſom feels!——

SEBASTES.

To ſerve thy cauſe, my zeal is on the wing—
Confide, Roxana, in thy faithful ſlave:—
He will avenge thy wrongs: my truſty friends
To thy dependants join'd, will ſhake the throne
Of haughty Xerxes; from him wreſt the crown,
And place it on thy head.

ROXANA.

What do I hear! [*aſide.*
Where are thy friends, thus ready to eſpouſe
My cauſe?

SEBASTES.

Revolted Egypt with them ſwarms:
The num'rous troops diſclaiming Xerxes' pow'r,
Are all at thy command: Orontes heads 'em
By my direction; as I bid him, moves,
And wholly ſtands devoted to my nod.
Behold this letter from Orontes.

ROXANA.

Hah!
To my apartment quick retire, Sebaſtes,
Attend me there, this place is moſt unſafe.

SEBASTES.

O charming princeſs! may I feed the hope
That thou wilt deign to look propitious down
On my long ſmother'd flame, and now reward
A paſſion which my lips ne'er dar'd reveal.

ROXANA.

Go: fear not, thy deſerts ſhall find their due.—
My mind is full of what I to thee owe:
Thou prov'ſt thyſelf a lover moſt ſincere!

SEBASTES.

Propitious pow'rs, thanks for this lucky moment! [*aſide.*

[*Exit.*

ROXANA. [Sola.]

Roxana! haſt thou courage to deſtroy
Whom thou ador'ſt—ah!—yes: too cruelly
Th' ungrateful ſlights thee:—let him fall a victim
To thy loud wrongs:—conſign him to his fate!—
I fain would ſee his perjur'd breaſt expos'd
To thouſand ſhafts,—and hear his dying groans!—
O gods! I make a boaſt of ſavageneſs;
While all theſe quiv'ring limbs my fears confeſs!—
A tender heart whom recent injuries move,
Now ſmells with frantic rage, then melts with love;
Now vows revenge, the traitor dooms to bleed,—
Then ſtarts with horror at the atrocious deed! [*Exit.*

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE, Themiſtocle's Apartment.

THEMISTOCLES.

O Athens!—O my country! name ſo fatal,
Yet ever dear!—for thee I've toil'd and bled,—
I've borne thy frowns, and unrepining dragg'd
From ſhore to ſhore the burthen of my woes!—
To keep my faith unſtain'd, am I reduc'd
To ſeem ungrateful to a gen'rous Monarch;
Who, tho' aggriev'd, tho' arm'd with pow'r ſupreme,
Not only pardons, takes me to his boſom;
But honours and intruſts me with that pow'r?
Athens! Thou ever ſhalt poſſeſs my thoughts;
But my fidelity will coſt me dear!

Enter SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

I am, by royal Xerxes to thee ſent:
He anxious waits to know thy laſt reſolve:
He fain would ſee thee from thine error free,
Nor will believe Themiſtocles ungrateful.

THEMISTOCLES.

I here atteſt the gods! who read my thoughts;
No foul ingratitude dwells in my ſoul,
Oh! could I but unlock my breaſt to Xerxes!——
Lead me, Sebaſtes, lead me to the king.

SEBASTES.

'Tis not permitted: on the altar firſt,
Reſolve to ſwear eternal hate to Greece,
Or never more expect t'approach his preſence.

THEMISTOCLES.

Can I then, at no other price, obtain
A hearing from my royal benefactor?

SEBASTES.

No: ſwear: and thou ſecur'ſt great Xerxes love.
Shouldſt thou refuſe, I tremble at thy fate:
Thou know'ſt the king's in this inexorable.

THEMISTOCLES.

Are there no means to ſave my fame from ſtain?—
Muſt I be rebel then, or ſeem ungrateful?——
No:—to the world I'll vindicate my truth,
And dying all mine obligations own.——
'Tis fix'd:—the deed is worthy of Themiſtocles. [*aſide.*
Bid them prepare the liquor, ſacred cup
And altar for the dread ſolemnity.

SEBASTES.

Tranſported now I fly
To Xerxes——

THEMISTOCLES.

Stay: where is Lyſimachus?

SEBASTES.

Ev'n now he leaves the port.

THEMISTOCLES.

Let him be ſtopt:
He ſhould be preſent at the ſolemn act;
Carry my pray'r, Sebaſtes, to the king.

SEBASTES.

He ſhall attend:—thou may'ſt diſpoſe of Xerxes.

THEMISTOCLES. [Solus.]

Let th' ev'ning of my days with ſplendor cloſe;
And in a blaze the twinkling lamp expire.
Hoa, guards, ſend hither Neocles, Aſpaſia.—
What, after all, is death?—a good?—let's haſte
To prove its ſweets:—an evil? let's avoid
The conſtant terrors of its near approach,
Much heighten'd by imagination's dreams.
Who gives up glory, parts with more than life:
All creatures to the laſt have equal claim;
The firſt's a privilege of dauntleſs minds.
Th' obſcure, who ſcarcely to himſelf is known,
Has cauſe indeed to dread awaiting death:

No

No trace of him remains beyond the grave:
While to new life in death is born the brave:
He runs o'er paſt exploits with felt delight,
And heroes' manſions open in his ſight.

Enter NEOCLES and ASPASIA.

NEOCLES.

O deareſt father!

ASPASIA.

Loſt, lamented Sire!

NEOCLES.

Confirm, oh! quick confirm, the hopes that tell us,
We find you reconciled to life and Xerxes!

ASPASIA.

Your breaſt at length, is with compaſſion mov'd
For our and your own ſufferings.

THEMISTOCLES.

No more;—
But be ye both attentive to my words.
Are you aware to what extent you owe
Obedience to a parent's laſt commands?

NEOCLES.

The law is ſacred.

ASPASIA.

'Tis the ſtrongeſt tie.

THEMISTOCLES.

Then by that duty I enjoin you both,
Not to reveal the ſecret I impart,
Till the important purpoſe time matures.

ASPASIA.

No: on my life.

NEOCLES.

I ſwear it ſolemnly.

THEMISTOCLES.

Sit down and of your courage give me proof.

NEOCLES.

Unuſual fears riſe in my mind!

ASPASIA.

I tremble!

THE-

THEMISTOCLES.

For the laſt time you hear your father's voice:
I have my children, till this moment, liv'd
For glory, if I ſhould prolong my life,
The fruit of all my labours would be loſt:
It reſts on me to die.

ASPASIA.

Hah! ſaid'ſt thou—Die!

NEOCLES.

Avert, ye pow'rs, the raſh reſolve!

THEMISTOCLES.

My gratitude
Is due to Xerxes for his benefits;
And Greece, my country—firm allegiance claims:
Theſe duties militate againſt each other:
Should either be infring'd, my name is branded
With th' epithets of rebel, or ungrateful.
I am by dying ſcreen'd from infamy.
I with me have a ſure and deadly poiſon.—

ASPASIA.

Have you not promis'd to repair to Xerxes?

THEMISTOCLES.

'Tis in his preſence, that I mean t'achieve
The memorable deed.

NEOCLES.

Sebaſtes ſays,
That you are now diſpos'd to take the oath.

THEMISTOCLES.

His error furthers my deſign, and gains me
Admittance to the king. Th' aſtoniſh'd world
Shall learn my rev'rence for that Prince and Athens.

NEOCLES.

We are undone.—

ASPASIA.

O wretched, loſt Aſpaſia!—

THEMISTOCLES.

Ah!—children!—what degrading weakneſs this!
Let me not bluſh to call myſelf your father—
Dry up your tears,—conceal this ſorrow from me:

You

You would indeed have ample cauſe to mourn,
Had I, when virtue bad, refus'd to die.

ASPASIA.

Ah!—if you die, what will become of us?

NEOCLES.

What have we left?

THEMISTOCLES.

What e'er I can bequeath:
My love of virtue, all my thirſt for glory,
The ſaving hand of Heav'n, and my example.

ASPASIA.

Ah! father!———

THEMISTOCLES.

Yield attention to my words:
Expos'd I leave you in a foreign country,
Amidſt your enemies, without ſuch means
As are requir'd for your ſupport in life;
Unſkill'd in fortune's ſad viciſſitudes:
Hence I foreſee the rigour of your fate.
Ye are my children; keep this in your minds:
On all occaſions, glory in that name.
The firſt ambition that ſhould fire your breaſts,
Is honour, pure affection for your country,
And ſtrict diſcharge of your reſpective duties,
In whatſoever ſtate the gods ſhall place you.
You may be great in the moſt lowly ſtation.
The virtues of the ſoul may find a ſcope
In lonely deſarts, as upon a throne.
Reſiſt the ſhocks of black adverſity:
All ill is found (ſo heav'n's high will ordains it)
Or in duration ſhort, or light in ſuff'rance.
Be virtuous, for the ſake of conſcious virtue,
And not of its rewards: hold vice in horror;
The crime diſgraces, not the puniſhment.
And ſhould you e'er be driven, by cruel ſtars,
To act a part unworthy of yourſelves;
The way to baffle ſhame is taught by me. [*riſes.*

NEOCLES.

Ah! do not leave us yet.—

ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

Alas!—my father!—
Shall poor Aſpaſia ne'er behold you more?

THEMISTOCLES.

Stifle your ſighs: wherefore lament my death?
It crowns my days with never-fading laurels.
I'm going now to triumph over fate,
And reap at length the fruit of all my toils.—
Come—let's have done, and take a final leave:
About my heart unuſual ſadneſs hangs.—
The ſcene grows too affecting—we muſt part:—
My ſoft'ning breaſt informs me, I'm a Father.—
I feel—no more:—farewell, farewell, for ever!

[*Exit.*

ASPASIA.

Ah Neocles!

NEOCLES.

Aſpaſia!

ASPASIA.

Cruel fates!
I brave your further rigour.

NEOCLES.

Burſting on us
A ſtorm of ills advances.

ASPASIA.

How avoid it?
Abandon'd thus to fate what can we do?

NEOCLES.

Shew ourſelves worthy of ſo great a Sire:
Let us, my ſiſter, follow quick his ſteps;
Let us behold his triumph o'er himſelf;
Our fortitude will mitigate his pangs.

ASPASIA.

Come then—O gods! my feet deny their office.

NEOCLES.

Ah!—canſt thou thus diſgrace thyſelf, Aſpaſia!

ASPASIA.

Whence this new courage that inſpires thy breaſt?

NEOCLES.

His preſence will repair all my defects;

A ſingle

A ſingle ray ſhot from his dying front,
Will animate my ſoul, and rouſe up virtue:
Our glorious ſire invites, let's baniſh fear,
And to his precepts piouſly adhere.

ASPASIA.

Why ſhould my brother of more firmneſs boaſt;—
The blood that fills his veins alike fills mine,
And ſprung too from the ſame illuſtrious ſource. [*aſide.*
Ah! yes:——let's haſte to prove our duteous zeal.—
His orphan daughter's arms ſhall claſp him fainting—
Her ſtreaming tears ſhall bathe his heaving breaſt—
And while his dying eyes ſhe cloſes—ah!—
A ſhooting chillneſs ſearches all my fibres;—
My ſtiffen'd feet are cleaving here to earth!
What conflict this of courage and diſmay!
Would honour go!—frail nature pleads to ſtay.
While wav'ring thus, I vent theſe fruitleſs ſighs;
The awful moment comes—my father dies!—
O gods! vouchſafe to grant me laſting peace,
And from its miſeries my ſoul releaſe! [*Exeunt.*

Enter XERXES.

XERXES.

Where is my general?—where is my Themiſtocles!
Let him not ſhun th' embraces of a king,
Who loves him thus.——

Enter ROXANA.

ROXANA.

Once more I trace thy ſteps.

XERXES.

Hah! interrupted! [*aſide.*

ROXANA.

Give me now an hearing,
For the laſt time.

XERXES.

Princeſs, by Xerxes' coldneſs,
Juſtly incens'd, I know thou ſeek'ſt revenge.

ROXANA.

ROXANA.

True: I am wrong'd, and meditate revenge;
Nay, hither come t'inflict the puniſhment.
Mark, Xerxes, on thee thus I wreak my vengeance:
Thy life and ſceptre are at ſtake:—beware:
This ſheet unravels dark conſpiracies.——
Learn hence thy danger, and Roxana's hatred.

XERXES.

Stay, Princeſs: ſuffer me in grateful thanks——

ROXANA.

Enough.——My great revenge is now complete,
And is the ſweeteſt I could hope t' enjoy.
Repaying outrages with benefits
Affords the pureſt joy to noble minds,
And makes my heart amends for all its pangs. [*Exit.*

XERXES. [Solus]

This letter to Sebaſtes is addreſs'd!——
How! from Orontes!—May I truſt my ſenſes?
What horrid perfidy! the traitor is then
The hidden author of th' Egyptian troubles!—
Yet, in my court, he makes the greateſt ſhew
Of zeal:—he comes.—Dares then the ſlave approach me?

Enter SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

Permit me, Sire, thus humbly to ſolicit
A recompence for ceaſeleſs toils and truth.

XERXES.

Thy merit claims, and ſhall obtain requital.

SEBASTES.

Themiſtocles is nam'd to head the army
Invading Greece: the troops which threaten Egypt
Have yet no chief: I pray for that command.

XERXES.

Thou crav'ſt no more!

SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

I ſhall be ſatisfied,
With the long wiſh'd-for means to give my Prince
This ſignal proof of unabating zeal.

XERXES.

Already known, thy faith requires no witneſs;
Yet this new proof is worthy of Sebaſtes.
Haſt thou ſufficient knowledge of the country?

SEBASTES.

I know its woods, its rivers, hills, and roads;
Nay, almoſt could enumerate its rocks.

XERXES.

'Tis not enough: thy knowledge ſhould extend
To the dark authors of that ſtrange revolt.

SEBASTES.

Orontes is the only one.

XERXES.

Indeed!
Are there no others then? peruſe this paper:
Art thou acquainted with theſe names?

SEBASTES.

Perdition:
I am betray'd! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

Traitor! at length thou trembleſt;—
Confuſion whelms thee:—has it ſtruck thee dumb?
Thy terror come too late, unworthy ſlave!
Thou ſhould'ſt have ſtartled at thy foul deſign,
And been deterr'd by horror from the crime.
Kind Providence detecting perfidy,
Conceals the danger from the traitor's ſight,
'Till he has reach'd the precipice's brink. [*Exit.*

SEBASTES. [Solus.]

Am I by thee betray'd? deceitful Princeſs!
Unthinking wretch! preſum'ſt thou to accuſe her,
How dares a traitor to complain of treachery!
Thou art moſt juſtly dealt with—fly—Sebaſtes!—

But whither! from myſelf, ah! whither fly?—
Within my breaſt, my own tormentors lie.
Where'er I bend my ſteps—deſpair will ſtart,
And haunt me:—it will wring my canker'd heart;
Of ſharp remorſe, I'll ever feel the ſmart:
And my ſtung conſcience, ſilent till this time,
Will henceforth chide me for my horrid crime.
[*Exit.*

SCENE, An Altar, with a Fire in the middle; on which ſtands a Cup.

Enter XERXES, NEOCLES, and ASPASIA, with Satraps, Guards, and the People.

XERXES.

Why penſive, Neocles!—thou ſigh'ſt Aſpaſia!
The children ſeem to mourn the father's act!—
Is Xerxes' friendſhip then ſo odious?—Speak.

ASPASIA, NEOCLES.

Oh!—Gods!

Enter ROXANA and LYSIMACHUS.

ROXANA.

To me—what means thy mandate, Xerxes?

LYSIMACHUS.

Why am I ſent for?

XERXES.

I requeſt your preſence.

ROXANA.

Am I to be anew inſulted here?

LYSIMACHUS.

Am I to bear freſh outrages for Athens,
Or witneſs here Aſpaſia's perfidy?

ASPASIA.

Ah! fear it not, unjuſt Lyſimachus;
Ceaſe to afflict me, I am ſtill the ſame:
Why add'ſt thou pangs to my heart-breaking grief?

XERXES.

XERXES.

What!—are ye lovers?

ASPASIA.

'Twere in vain to hide it.

XERXES.

You offer'd me your hand!

ASPASIA.

My father's life
Requir'd the ſacrifice.

XERXES.

Thou perſecuteſt
The father of thy love.

LYSIMACHUS.

'Tis Athens' will.

XERXES.

Amazing courage!

ROXANA.

Lo! the Grecian chief!

Enter THEMISTOCLES.

NEOCLES.

O calm ſecurity of conſcious virtue! [*aſide.*

ASPASIA.

How my poor heart is flutt'ring in my breaſt! [*aſide.*

XERXES.

At length, thank heav'n! thou'rt mine, Themiſtocles!
Haſte to thy king—thy friend!—fly to my arms!

THEMISTOCLES.

Excuſe me, Sire.

XERXES.

How!

THEMISTOCLES.

All unworthy now,
The awful act perform'd, I may deſerve it.

XERXES.

All that the rites require, behold prepar'd.
The cup is on the altar; take the oath:
And thus commence the puniſhment of Greece!

THEMISTOCLES.

It is now time to undeceive thee, Xerxes:
I promis'd to appear, but not to ſwear.

XERXES.

Yet thou———

THEMISTOCLES.

O Xerxes! condeſcend to hear me:
Give ear, Lyſimachus;—attend ye people:
Let all bear witneſs to my ſentiments.
Relentleſs fate would make me or ungrateful
Or traitor:——no alternative is left;
But to ſubmit to guilt and infamy;
Or to reſign my life, the god's free gift.
One kind aſylum opens its friendly arms,
Whoſe welcome fearleſs I accept——the grave.

LYSIMACHUS.

What do I hear?

XERXES.

O gods!

THEMISTOCLES.

This ſubtle venom,
My kind companion in a painful exile,
Shall here conſummate th' ever glorious work:
The ſacred liquor, in this holy vaſe,
Shall bear it through my veins.—Aſſiſt, O gods!
At th' offering of a victim thus devoted
To loyalty—to gratitude—and honour.

ASPASIA.

Support me, gracious pow'rs!

XERXES.

I'm wrapt in wonder.

THEMISTOCLES.

Be it thy taſk, my friend Lyſimachus!
T' aſſure our country of my firm attachment:
Petition in the favour of my aſhes:
I pardon all the wrongs heap'd on my head,
And only crave a place for my cold urn.
O mighty king! repent not of thy bounties:
Th' admiring world will recompence thy deeds:

All

All that my gratitude can now perform,
Is to atteſt thy benefits——and die.——
And O ye gracious Gods! who hear the pray'rs
Of th' innocent, look down upon my country;
Defend—protect—exalt your favourite Athens!
Watch o'er this Monarch, and diſpoſe his breaſt
To peace! O may his hate end with my life!——
My children,—friend,—king,—people——all, farewell!

XERXES.

Stop:—Suffer not his lips to touch the cup.—

THEMISTOCLES.

Why hinder my juſt purpoſe?

XERXES.

The raſh act
To me diſgraceful were, to thee unjuſt.

THEMISTOCLES.

Great Xerxes' ſway extends not over death:
It is the only pow'r denied to monarchs.

XERXES.

Live pride of Greece! and live to love thy country:
I yield conſent:——ſhe merits all thy love:
Nor can myſelf refuſe her my regard:
Who could perſiſt to hate a happy ſoil,
Productive of ſuch heroes?

THEMISTOCLES.

Mighty pow'rs!
What proſpect opens to my ſanguine hopes!

XERXES.

Behold! and wonder at the great exertion
Of virtue rivall'd: on this very altar,
Where thou wert to have ſworn eternal hate;
I ſwear a laſting amity with Greece:
She is indebted to thy matchleſs zeal,
Illuſtrious exile, for her calm repoſe.

THEMISTOCLES.

O generous Prince! what triumph o'er mankind!
Can mortals riſe to ſuch a height of greatneſs!
O happy baniſhment! O Greece! O Athens!——

ASPASIA.

ASPASIA.

O moment of delight!

NEOCLES.

O bliſsful day!

LYSIMACHUS.

Let me fly back to Greece, O god-like ſouls!
With joyful tidings of your noble ſtrife:
Her cities will reſound the glorious names
Of the great giver and kind mediator.

Enter SEBASTES.

SEBASTES.

Dread Sire! my crimes call for their puniſhment
Life now is odious to me.——

XERXES.

Riſe, Sebaſtes;
This happy day ſhall only breath delight;
I pardon thee: The fair Aſpaſia's free.
I to Roxana pledge my royal faith,
A juſt return for well tried conſtancy.

ROXANA.

O Xerxes moſt belov'd!

ASPASIA.

Lyſimachus!

THEMISTOCLES.

All-gracious Heav'n! on me confer the pow'r
To ſignalize my gratitude and zeal,
For this great Monarch!

XERXES.

Let's beſeech the Gods,
To guard thy life, and grant thee length of days:
Thou canſt not want the means to make returns:
More lies within thy pow'r, than in my gift.
Thou (of example's force illuſtrious teſt!)
Thou haſt rous'd virtue ſlumb'ring in my breaſt.
Heroic deeds ſtrong emulation cauſe,
'Twixt ſouls congenial, panting for applauſe:

Their

Their boſoms, with an equal ardor glow,
And from their union joys diffuſive flow.
Thus rival lights, with double ſplendor ſhine,
And to illume together muſt combine.

FINIS.

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